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Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-41400 (E)

The meeting was preceded by a panel discussion on the topic of "Rural development and the challenges of social welfare: A country-level perspective". The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council. The panellists were Mr. Bunmi Makinwa, Director, Africa Division, United Nations Population Fund; and Mr. Allan Jury, Director, Division of External Relations, World Food Programme.

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 11.40 a.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (E/2008/21 and E/2008/77)

1. **Mr. Hunte** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the 2008 coordination segment afforded a timely and appropriate occasion to consider the United Nations system approach to implementation of the commitments reached at the major conferences and summits. The range of multidimensional challenges confronting the international community, the competition for resources and the current discussions on system-wide coherence in the General Assembly made it particularly opportune to focus on a coordinated response of the system as a whole. He stressed the Council's role in guiding coordination in the economic and social fields and the importance of existing, intergovernmentally agreed mandates on coordination of the system's development activities.

2. Discussions of a coordinated response to the development needs and priorities of developing countries should be placed in the context of new and emerging challenges. Climate change, food security, the energy crisis and financial instability in developed countries' markets would have a negative impact on their ability to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), by 2015.

3. The Group of 77 and China also welcomed the review of implementation of the 2007 ministerial declaration and, in particular, the focus on the role of the United Nations system in its implementation. The declaration stressed the need for a more comprehensive approach to achieving MDG Goal 1 by 2015 and identified a number of policy areas where urgent action was needed, including investment in rural and agricultural development; transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries; education and training, especially for girls and women; and enhanced international cooperation to achieve full implementation of Agenda 21. Developments in the last 12 months had made those recommendations more relevant and urgent.

4. It was the responsibility of all countries, both developed and developing, to promote policies consistent with the commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits in order to achieve development goals, including the eradication of poverty and hunger. In particular, developed countries needed to take urgent action to correct the distorting impact of their trade, energy, and financial policies and their unsustainable consumption and production patterns on the developing countries' prospects for achieving the MDGs.

5. The United Nations system had been improving its coordination through various mechanisms, in particular the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The Group was of the view that the Board's work could be enhanced through greater intergovernmental oversight and accountability. Member States, and developing countries in particular, must be kept informed on a regular basis of all activities of the CEB, which should enhance its interaction with the Council through the coordination segment and at the highest management level.

6. Member States played a vital role in ensuring coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels and in ensuring a strong, direct link between coordination and development effectiveness. The Group reiterated that each country had the primary responsibility for its own development through the principle of national ownership and leadership, including at the country level.

7. The triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/62/208) underscored that the ownership, leadership and full participation of national

authorities in the preparation and development of all planning and programming documents of the United Nations development system, including the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), were key to ensuring that they responded to national development plans and strategies. The Framework and its results matrix should be used as the common programming tool at the country level in order to enhance aid efficiency and effectiveness.

8. The Council should instruct its subsidiary bodies to implement measures for promoting coordination within their respective mandates. In turn, these subsidiary bodies should ensure that policy guidance from the Council on the implementation of agreed outcomes, particularly those related to the MDGs, was integrated into their programmes of work and operational activities for development. The Group urged the Council to ensure that the subsidiary bodies gave top priority to the eradication of poverty and hunger in their thematic focus areas, including by allocating financial resources to reflect that priority, taking national development needs and priorities into account.

9. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia and Moldova, said that the ministerial declaration adopted by the Council in 2007 had reiterated the international community's commitment to eradicating poverty and hunger and had placed that goal at the core of operations within the United Nations system. Numerous courses of action underscored the multidimensional nature of Goal 1 of the MDGs.

10. The overall progress towards that Goal concealed the persistence of inequalities both between and within countries while the spike in food and energy prices could jeopardize the progress that had been made. The European Union was particularly concerned about the situation in Africa, as well as that of fragile States and those that were emerging from conflicts; the challenges they presented must be addressed by donors, but primarily by African governments. The high-level meeting on Africa's development, to be held on 22 September 2008, would provide an opportunity to discuss Africa's development goals.

11. Further inroads against poverty and hunger were needed, first at national level since each country was responsible for its own development, and then at the international level through policies and programmes that offered better chances for development within the framework of a global partnership, by including States, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector.

12. The European Union endorsed the United Nations system efforts in support of the MDGs, which were interdependent. Those efforts must be accompanied by actions and policies aimed at stimulating inclusive economic growth and must address cross-cutting issues such as human rights, democracy, democratic governance, gender equality, the empowerment of women, the promotion of decent work for all and improved integration into world information exchange networks. The European Union was determined to make 2008 a turning point in the effort to combat poverty. It was concerned by the slowness of progress towards MDG Goal 7, relating to sustainable development. It stressed the importance of the commitments made within the framework of the Commission for Sustainable Development and reaffirmed its intention to carry out the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

13. The European Union called for a better coordinated and longer-term international response to the current food crisis, in particular through the United Nations and international financial institutions and in the context of the Group of Eight. It welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and was determined to play its full part in implementing the Declaration agreed during the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and held in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008.

14. The European Union wished to stress the importance of analysing the situation in partner countries so that the United Nations system could respond appropriately to the needs of each country through use of the most relevant instruments. It attached great importance to efforts to strengthen coordination of the Organization's actions, including those taken to combat climate change, and to increase its effectiveness and efficiency through the Delivering as One initiative. In preparation for the Third High-

Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008, the European Union echoed the statement, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21, para. 67), that the United Nations system should make more effective use of existing frameworks in order to ensure that the various dimensions of poverty and hunger were taken into account.

15. **Mr. Uskov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/21). The theme of eradicating poverty and hunger in the context of the MDGs was more relevant than ever, particularly in light of the emerging global food crisis. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force in order to assess progress in implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group set up by the Secretary-General would also provide a broad review of existing implementation mechanisms for achieving the MDGs in Africa.

16. His delegation agreed that United Nations system analytical work should include building national capacities to analyse national constraints and opportunities, design effective development strategies and mobilize adequate resources for their implementation. There would be an increasing need for collective efforts not only by all parts of the United Nations system, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), but by other development partners such as international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. Inter-agency coordination would also need to improve with a view to the implementation of targeted measures at the national, regional and global levels, in order to promote employment.

17. The Council's, work should be geared towards promoting a coherent and consistent approach within the United Nations system, under which equal attention should be paid to all key aspects of eradicating poverty and hunger. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning the promotion of a system-wide programme of work on science and technology, including information communications technologies, for poverty reduction (E/2008/21, para. 68 (e)). Existing mechanisms and formats, could also be used, particularly during the coordination and operational segments of the Council, to discuss and adopt One Country Programmes.

18. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that rising oil prices and the financial turbulence experienced by some developed countries were taking a toll on the world economy, rising food prices had made the issue of food security a global crisis, and climate change continued to be a threat. For many developing countries, that situation placed additional hurdles in the way of their development ambitions. She welcomed the recent initiatives taken at the global level to address those challenges, particularly, the establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis and the Task Force's issuance of the draft comprehensive framework for action; the draft contained proposals for addressing the food crisis and easing the burden on the poor in many developing countries.

19. Any solution to the global food and energy crisis must be multidimensional. Efforts must be made to mainstream the agriculture sector into national development strategies, which should not only aim to increase productivity at farm level; they must also include policies for enhancing rural infrastructure, developing agro-industry and agri-business in rural areas and giving small and local farmers access to domestic markets. The Council could contribute by monitoring the effectiveness of such policy options. An integrated early warning system to monitor the status of global food security would also be valuable.

20. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/21) highlighted important areas where national capacities needed to be improved in order to help countries face their current challenges. Member States must be kept informed of the board's activities on a regular basis, perhaps through enhanced interaction with the Council during the coordination segment.

21. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that in implementing the 2007 ministerial declaration, the Organization had played a valuable role in advocating the importance of reflecting local particularities in frameworks for development and for the eradication of poverty and hunger. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that that approach had been less well reflected in bilateral development cooperation, where cost pressures were forcing donors to adopt uniform methods of evaluation

across all programme countries without taking the countries' perspective into account. Since that problem was partly a result of the countries' lack of evaluation capacity, he endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the United Nations system should do more to promote national ownership (E/2008/21, para. 68 (j)); that approach was consistent with the recently adopted triennial comprehensive policy review. The Council's role in coordinating the work of the United Nations, could also be improved, including through more meaningful interaction with the CEB. However, the fact that the Board reported to the governing bodies rather than to the Council would make perfect synchronicity with the Council's work impossible.

22. Although the Secretary-General's report mentioned the importance of science and technology in efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, it did not contain any reference to the role played by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. The United Nations should do more to promote science and technology as a means of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, and those of the Council's ministerial declarations by establishing a framework for facilitating technology transfer and promoting a view of developing countries as producers, rather than mere consumers, of technology. In that context, Malaysia had recently established the International Centre for South-South Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation and had hosted the World Congress on Information Technology in May 2008.

23. **Ms. Kuzganova** (Kazakhstan) said that the deterioration of the world economy and the global food crisis had undermined the international community's efforts to combat humanitarian threats, particularly that of famine. Whereas, in the past, hunger could readily be attributed to droughts or other natural disasters, one of its main causes was now the high cost of food. The need to ensure food security had become a problem that faced not only the least developed countries, but also countries with rapidly developing markets and even developed countries. The lack of global food security had resulted from a combination of factors: the rise in energy prices; the rapid increase in the world's population; the increased production of biofuels; global climate change; and the reduction in global food reserves. The international community must take decisive action to stabilize the global economy; national policies should focus on increasing food production and gaining access to world food markets, without depleting natural resources or damaging the environment.

24. Her Government was working to offset the negative consequences of the current global economic situation through policies designed to prevent a slowdown in economic development, curb national inflation and ensure the continued provision of food commodities. Kazakhstan's agricultural industry had seen a number of positive developments in recent years, including rising production levels and an overall increase in direct agricultural subsidies, which totalled $185 million in 2008.

25. The Government had also allocated an additional US$ 266 million to ensuring food security through measures such as the purchase of grain from State reserves; subsidized interest rates on loans from second-tier banks to agricultural processing companies; and subsidized interest rates for the lease of reprocessing equipment and special technology. In order to stabilize the domestic price of core foodstuffs and to ensure that the population had continued access to sufficient food, the Government had introduced temporary food export bans, reduced customs tariffs on the most important commodities and established grain stabilization funds in major cities.

26. The coordinated efforts of all countries to establish a joint agricultural policy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural industry would play an important role in ensuring food security at the national level. Her delegation hoped that the current discussion would provide a useful contribution to the search for ways of addressing the problems of food security, malnutrition and hunger at the national and international levels.

27. **Mr. Chave** (Observer for Switzerland) said that there had been substantive but uneven progress in reducing poverty and hunger worldwide. Countries with equivalent levels of per capita income showed different levels of progress in job creation, employment and agricultural development, underscoring that there were no "one-size-fits-all" solutions and that reality called for differentiated, country-specific approaches. As the 2007 ministerial declaration pointed out, the challenges related to the eradication of poverty and hunger were multidimensional in nature. Owing to its diversity of

experience and expertise, the United Nations might be the best-equipped system for addressing such complex issues. However, its efforts needed to be coordinated carefully, especially at country level. The global and vertical initiatives and actions described in the Secretary-General's report (E/2008/21) must be translated into coordinated action at the country level and integrated within development assistance frameworks.

28. Only a few months after the Council's 2007 ministerial declaration had referred to the fight against hunger as a central priority for the United Nations system, the world had experienced a global food crisis. Although warning signals had been issued by some parts of that system, a globally coordinated response in the form of the Secretary-General's Task Force had occurred only after the crisis had begun. The High-level Committee on Programmes and the Committee for Development Policy could play an important role in anticipating global problems. In order to combat poverty and hunger in a comprehensive manner, an integrated approach to rural and urban development that combined social, environmental and economic policies was needed. Urbanization should be seen not only as a problem to be solved, but as an opportunity for sustainable development.

29. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly relations, including resolution 61/16 (E/2008/77), he said that his delegation was pleased that the annual ministerial review had established a multi-year programme of work, although a longer-term perspective would have been preferable, and agreed that the annual review process would be a more effective way for the Council to assume its overall responsibilities in the area of integrated conference follow-up. Its delegation also supported the idea, mentioned in paragraph 51 of the report that the report on integrated conference follow-up should be produced triennially.

30. While recognizing that the dual normative and operational nature of the United Nations system was one of its greatest assets, his delegation did not understand the suggestion made in paragraph 58 of the Secretary-General's report and sought clarification.

31. Lastly, in order to further strengthen the coherence between the policy and operational aspects of the United Nations system, the coordination segment should be dedicated systematically to implementation of the previous year's ministerial declaration.

32. **Mr. Liu** Liqun (China) said that in order to eliminate poverty and hunger, both policy complementarity and coordination among stakeholders were necessary. Cooperation among United Nations agencies on the basis of the priorities identified in the ministerial declaration had already made a positive contribution to global efforts in that regard. China supported achievement of the MDGs as a development priority, but the issue of poverty and hunger could not be addressed with a "one-size-fits-all" approach; the particular situations and specific needs of countries must be taken into consideration. Developing countries should be helped to formulate appropriate strategies and policies; his delegation welcomed United Nations agencies' efforts to reflect national experiences in their policies and programmes.

33. The rising prices of food and energy, climate change and a slowing world economy had complicated developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty and meet the MDGs, and had jeopardized the achievements of the past decade. The international community, and developed countries in particular, must honour their commitments with regard to official development assistance (ODA), debt reduction, market access, climate change, energy and food; the United Nations and other relevant regional and international organizations should also increase their financial, technical and capacity-building support for developing countries.

34. The impact of rising energy and food costs on poverty eradication efforts required special attention. All stakeholders should strengthen their cooperation and provide an integrated response in the areas of aid, finance and trade; his delegation supported a leading and coordinating role for the United Nations in that regard.

35. The United Nations system should continue to improve its internal coordination and its active cooperation with other partners in order to mobilize the potential of all stakeholders to address obstacles to poverty eradication. His delegation supported the Council's role in encouraging the participation of the private sector and civil society in international

cooperation for development, achievement of the MDGs and implementation of the United Nations development agenda.

36. **Mr. Young** (United States of America) said that the international community had made great strides towards eradicating poverty. However, with every success it became clear that much more needed to be done. Despite the challenges of the uncertain economic times, impressive growth was being seen in many developing countries; their average growth rate was expected to be a resilient 6.5 per cent in 2008, well above the rates of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. Even in Africa, where the challenge of economic growth was the most difficult, trends were improving; a majority of low-income African countries showed growth in their per capita income of 2 per cent or more and among low- and middle-income Asian countries, with only two exceptions, growth ranged between 3.5 and 7.5 per cent. The growth trend was increasingly positive in Latin America, as well.

37. Yet, despite those positive trends, critical problems continued to hinder efforts to eradicate poverty. The international community should continue to work together and should not seek overly simplistic answers to difficult challenges. For example, urbanization was not the cause of poverty; critical services could be delivered cost-effectively through sensible strategies. Similarly, climate change was often incorrectly listed as the sole cause of natural disasters and a direct contributor to global poverty, and corn-based biofuel production was said to play a major role in the rapid increase in food prices, ignoring other significant contributing factors. Policy should reflect objective analysis; progress against global poverty and hunger depended on a comprehensive approach.

38. While ODA could have a catalytic effect, experience had shown that trade, investment, and other private financial flows were the primary drivers in reducing poverty. The United States of America had committed more than US$ 7 billion in trade-related assistance since 2001 and was increasingly supporting national ownership, promoting best practices to improve aid effectiveness and leveraging private resources. While targets such as the MDGs were useful and progress was being made, the international community should focus on effectiveness through ownership and resist the urge to focus exclusively on alleged "gaps" to be filled. An absolute increase in aid would not ensure success in meeting the mutually agreed goals. The commitment made in the Millennium Declaration required the global community to promote ownership, build capacity, foster enabling and transparent environments and support processes that would enable Governments to provide desperately needed services to their people.

39. As part of that effort to ensure the effective delivery of aid, international organizations must remain focused on their core mission. Country efforts to achieve the MDGs would only be hampered by mission overlap, and discussion in the Council of matters best left to other bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), might not be appropriate or useful. Significant gains were more likely when agencies focused on their own core missions and comparative advantages while working collaboratively with others.

40. It was essential for countries to take ownership of its development goals and to have their own national strategies for achieving them. They should be free to choose their own goals, including the MDGs, in light of their different challenges and priorities. His Government supported the work of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in their "twin track" approach to rural development, as well as the efforts of, inter alia, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to ensure that civil society and the private sector took ownership of critical poverty and hunger eradication programmes.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.